

Melanoma and Sun Safety



Where does melanoma usually appear?

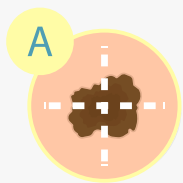
60,000+

people are diagnosed with melanoma in the United States annually.

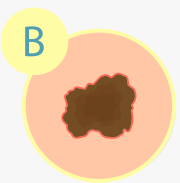
Melanoma can appear anywhere on the skin surface. In men, it is most common on the back or on the head and neck, and in women, on the back or the back of the legs. Melanoma can develop in a pre-existing mole, or arise on normal-appearing skin.

What are the signs and symptoms of melanoma?

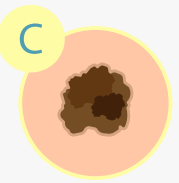
Melanoma can often be recognized by its appearance. The ABCDE rule can help patients and physicians recognize melanoma:




A
Asymmetry, or an irregular shape of a mole




B
Borders that are irregular



C
Color within the mole that is variable or very dark



D
Diameter greater than 6 mm





E
Evolving over time


Be sure to check the palms of your hands and feet, finger nails, toe nails and behind the ears. A mole that increases in size, changes shape or color, itches or bleeds is also suspicious. **Know your skin.** Be aware of any changes as noted above and any areas of dry patchy skin or sores that don't heal.


Although skin cancer is more common in Caucasians, everyone is at risk regardless of skin color. Individuals with darker skin should remain diligent as many are diagnosed at a later stage, making it just as important to maintain regular skin inspections.


What can I do to reduce my risk of skin cancer?


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Learn to identify and diagnose melanoma as early as possible
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
Reduce and limit ultraviolet (UV) exposure from natural sunlight
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Schedule a yearly skin exam by a dermatologist
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Do a monthly skin self-examination; research has shown that individuals, not doctors, are most likely to spot melanoma
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Generously apply sunscreen to all exposed skin approximately 15 minutes before sun exposure; reapply every two hours and after swimming or sweating
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Wear protective clothing whenever possible like a wide-brim hat, sunglasses, long-sleeved pants and shirts
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Seek shade when possible
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Do not get sunburned
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Avoid intentional tanning and indoor tanning beds
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Get your dose of Vitamin D through alternate ways, like a healthy diet and/or vitamin supplements, if recommended by your doctor